

SCENIC HIGHWAY ELEMENT

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Scenic Highway Element

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SCENIC

HIGHWAY

ELEMENT

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SCENIC HIGHWAY ELEMENT

The purpose of the Scenic Highway Element is fourfold: (1) to inform the city of the State Scenic Highway Program including identification of state and county roads that are, or could be, designated as scenic routes under the state program (2) to develop standards and criteria by which a local scenic route system can be developed and maintained (3) to make recommendations on (a) whether a local scenic route system supplementing the state program is feasible and desirable (b) whether other scenic amenities in the community deserve protection or enhancement, and (4) to facilitate coordination between the city and the county regarding scenic routes traversing both jurisdictions.

The State Scenic Highway Program

A State Scenic Highway Program was established in 1963. This program includes standards, guidelines and a Master Plan map showing which state highways are eligible for official designation. The state role in implementing the program includes the preparation of a corridor study at the request of the local governments having jurisdiction over land use in the scenic corridor, and they review and approve the local scenic corridor protection plan and install the "poppy" signs along the officially designated route. The corridor study suggests scenic highway corridor boundaries, identifies scenic values and defines the relationship of the right-of-way to its surrounding environment. It also notes the scenic and aesthetic elements that should be preserved and potential locations for roadside rests, vista points and areas for information sites. This report is for the use of the local jurisdiction in the development of the local scenic corridor protection and enhancement program.

The local protection plan and program must include as a minimum: (1) Regulations of land use density or intensity of development (2) Provisions for review of site planning on proposed developments (3) Control of outdoor advertising (4) Control of earth moving and provisions for landscaping cuts and fills and (5) Control of the design and appearance of structures and equipment. Citizen involvement during the corridor study and development of the local program is stressed.

Once the local protection program is in effect the local jurisdiction can request official designation. If the Director of Transportation approves the program the state then proceeds with placement of the signs and other efforts to identify the route.

In addition to state highways, county roads may be officially designated as scenic routes if the county has designated the route in the scenic highways element of its general plan and adopted a protection program that meets the criteria for state highway protection programs. The state does not perform the corridor study, but they are available to provide technical assistance.

Although the program would appear to have much appeal very few portions of the eligible state routes have been designated. Those that have been are mostly segments within state and federal parks where public ownership of the land makes implementation of a protection plan almost a formality. Resistance to adding more land use controls within the scenic corridor, and concern about increased tourist impacts on the roadway corridor and adjacent communities are two reasons that more segments of eligible state routes have not been designated.

State Highway 101 which passes through the Rio Dell planning area, is eligible for official scenic highway designation. A corridor study has already been prepared for the portion of Highway 101 from the Mendocino County line to the Rio Dell city limits. Highway 36, which terminates at Highway 101 just north of Rio Dell is also eligible for scenic highway designation. Local residents suggested that any designation of Highway 101 include the segment through Rio Dell and up to the Highway 36 intersection. Rio Dell identifies with the recreational opportunities available to the east on Highway 36 and to the south on Highway 101 and provides services to many of the people enjoying these attractions. If the segment from Rio Dell to Highway 36 is to be included in the proposed designation of Highway 101, the city and the county will need to submit a formal request to the State Department of Transportation for a corridor study, and be prepared to develop and adopt the necessary corridor protection program. When the freeway bypass through Rio Dell is complete scenic highway eligibility will shift from Wildwood to the freeway, which local residents feel will be more scenic.

Local Scenic Roads

Monument Road and Blue Slide-Grizzly Bluff Road are both considered scenic by local residents and were suggested for inclusion in any scenic route program. The view from atop Monument Road is spectacular and interest in establishing a vista point was expressed. Blue Slide Road offers vistas of the Eel River Valley and connects with the scenic pastoral area surrounding the community of Ferndale. These routes are relatively free of garish roadside advertising and unsightly land uses. The existing city and county zoning regulations preclude most undesirable land uses and outdoor advertising. Since these routes are mostly beyond the planning area boundary the appropriate way to consider such a program is in the Scenic Highway Element of the County General Plan. Residents living on the hillside above Pacific Avenue in Rio Dell enjoy a vista of the Eel River as it circles the community and the Scotia Bluffs which contain interesting and much sought after fossils.

Scenic Route Criteria and Standards

The routes mentioned above meet most of the following criteria for a scenic route. Criteria #6 is the most significant concern due to the narrow rights-of-way, lack of centerline striping and edge markers. The criteria are:

1. A definable scenic corridor
2. Quality in scenic view of natural, improved or historic areas
3. A variety of terrain and landscape
4. Conformance with open space and conservation objectives

5. ~~Accessibility~~ between areas of recreation, parks or historical interest
6. Routes of adequate design and safety
7. Control of development within the scenic corridor to prevent obstruction of important views or development of unsightly land uses
8. Screening or relocation of existing unsightly land uses
9. Complements the land use and circulation elements of the General Plan
10. Opportunity for development of vista points, roadside rests, and other amenities.

Besides these criteria which suggest the desirable character of the scenic corridor, there are policies which can be implemented to insure that the road improvements themselves do not detract from the scenic quality.

1. Where any portion of road is reconstructed, the natural grade should be followed as much as possible - minimizing cuts and fills.
2. Scenic roads should be designed for moderate travel speed.
3. Improvements related to the scenic route system, such as route location and directional signs, roadside rests and vista points, should be provided where possible, and be attractively designed to blend with the scenery.
4. Natural landscaping, particularly on cuts and fills, should be provided for scenic improvements and erosion control.

Is a Scenic Route Program Desirable?

When questioned about the desirability of designating the scenic routes in the planning area as county scenic highways under the state program or as scenic routes in a local program most of the local citizens responded favorably. They noted that tourists miss these scenic opportunities and shouldn't need to stop and ask where the routes are. They felt that tourism was important to the economy of the community and should be encouraged. They realize that such a program must be regional in nature and involve the coordinated effort of several cities and the county if it is to be successfully accomplished.

If identified in the County General Plan Scenic Highway Element, these routes could be officially designated as county scenic highways by the State or the scenic route system could be a local program, consisting of attractive road signs at frequent intervals identifying the routes. No special corridor definition or protective program would be necessary. Roads within such a system should be properly maintained and tourists should be warned when the narrow, winding character of the road makes travel by large recreational vehicles hazardous.

1. The first step in the process of developing a business plan is to conduct a market analysis.

2. The second step is to determine the company's mission and vision.

3. The third step is to identify the company's target market and develop a marketing strategy.

4. The fourth step is to determine the company's financial needs and develop a financial plan.

5. The fifth step is to develop a management team and implement the business plan.

6. The sixth step is to monitor the company's progress and make adjustments as needed.

7. The seventh step is to evaluate the company's performance and make adjustments as needed.

8. The eighth step is to develop a long-term strategy for the company's future growth.

9. The ninth step is to implement the long-term strategy and monitor the company's progress.

10. The tenth step is to evaluate the company's performance and make adjustments as needed.

11. The eleventh step is to develop a long-term strategy for the company's future growth.

12. The twelfth step is to implement the long-term strategy and monitor the company's progress.

13. The thirteenth step is to evaluate the company's performance and make adjustments as needed.

14. The fourteenth step is to develop a long-term strategy for the company's future growth.

Environmental Assessment. In general the establishment of scenic routes implies a desire to attract visitors and to channel or concentrate visitor traffic. If the effect is significant the visitors will have a mild stimulatory effect on local trade and will increase the traffic load of certain thoroughfares. The effects will be proportionate to the number of visitors attracted. Increase in traffic will call for an increase in maintenance and patrol activity at the public's expense. Increase in traffic will also increase the level of noise pollution and air pollution for residents adjacent to the involved thoroughfares.

The construction of parking facilities and vistas near scenic attractions has certain predictable impacts. There is a long term or permanent commitment of a small plot of land with the necessary destruction of vegetation and wildlife habitat. There is an increase in runoff carrying heavy metals and petroleum by-products into surface waters at each rain. These impacts are very localized. There is a commitment of resources in the form of construction materials and the commitment of energy resources for construction. Finally, there are the short term impacts of noise and air quality degradation during construction. Proper engineering and construction practices should eliminate or mitigate construction impacts and the possible effects of geological and landscape hazards such as slippage. Maintenance, including trash pick-up will call for a commitment of public funds. Areas adjacent to vistas will receive increased use in some cases. Trails and trash are common features of the brushy areas around many north coast vistas. The presence of vistas near residences will have an impact on the residents. The nature and degree of the impact will depend as much upon the nature of the residents as upon the volume of sightseers.

Review of land use plans and zoning ordinances can have a variety of impacts if changes result from the review. The most likely recommendations of a review oriented to a scenic highway program would involve inclusion of architectural and landscaping provisions and controls on the installation of signs in the viewshed. Such recommendations will meet citizen resistance from the owner whose development costs are increased and from the commercial community that benefits from billboard advertising.

Scenic Highway Element Recommendations

Recommendation #1. The city should notify Humboldt County of its desire to include the segment of Highway 101 from Rio Dell to Highway 36 in any proposal to designate Highway 101 in southern Humboldt County. The city should join the county in requesting a supplemental corridor study for this additional segment and indicate its willingness to adopt the necessary protective program along the new freeway route. Such a program would include control of the design of highly visible structures within the viewshed and limitations on outdoor advertising. The visual characteristics of land uses developed along the freeway should be considered and controlled where necessary, since the freeway will become the main entrance into the city.

Recommendation #2. The city should convey to Humboldt County the support of local residents for a regional scenic route program including but not limited to the following routes: Highway 1 into Ferndale, Centerville Road from Ferndale to the beach, Wildcat Road from Ferndale to Petrolia and on to Bull Creek State Park and Highway 101, Monument Road westerly from Rio Dell to the vista point, Grizzley Bluff-Blue Slide Road between Rio Dell and Ferndale.

Environmental Assessment. Development of such a program will require a commitment of staff time, materials for signs, and the impacts typically associated with use of sign installation equipment.

Recommendation #3. The city should study the possibility of utilizing a hillside area as a vista point providing a view of the city, the Eel River and the Scotia Bluffs.

Recommendation #4. The city should cooperate with the county in a study of the possibility of developing a vista point in the vicinity of the Monument Road-Upper Bear River Ridge Road intersection.

Recommendation #5. The city should encourage the provision of street trees and landscaping in new developments and should consider ways that street trees, landscaping and other natural features can be provided in public right-of-ways. The city should continue its policy of encouraging landscaping and maintenance of unused portions of street rights-of-ways by local civic groups. In conjunction with consideration of revised on-street parking patterns along Wildwood Avenue, installation of attractive street lights, landscaping, street trees, benches and even public restrooms should be considered as part of an effort to give the downtown area a distinctive identity and to encourage owners to improve the condition and appearance of their business properties.

Recommendation #6. The Rio Dell Planning Commission should review existing zoning classifications within the viewshed of the new freeway, particularly at interchanges, and wherever appropriate adopt controls over buildings profile and design and require on-site landscaping for new developments so that the view from the new freeway will not be degraded and, the major entrances to the city will be visually attractive. These efforts at scenic protection are important to the community whether or not the freeway is designated an official scenic highway.

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